



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

1400 South 19<sup>th</sup>  
Bozeman, MT 59718

November 14, 2001

To: Governor's Office, Todd O'Hair, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801  
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620  
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office  
Wildlife Division  
Legal Unit

Parks Division  
Lands Section  
FWP Commissioners

Fisheries Division  
Design & Construction Bureau  
Dennis Flath

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1201  
Montana State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103  
Montana State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Avenue, P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620  
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624  
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624  
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624  
Beaverhead County Commissioners, Beaverhead County Courthouse, Dillon, MT 59725  
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771-1571  
Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624  
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923  
Glenn Hockett, Gallatin Wildlife Association, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715  
Bob Raney, 212 So. 6<sup>th</sup>, Livingston, MT 59047  
Skyline Sportsmen's Assoc., P.O. Box 173, Butte, MT 59701  
Anaconda Sportsman's Club, #2 Cherry, Anaconda, MT 59711  
Jefferson Valley Sportsman's Assoc., P.O. Box 663, Whitehall, MT 59759  
Prickly Pear Sportsman's Assoc., 1721 Virginia Dale St., Helena, MT 59601  
Tom Sather, Headwaters Fish & Game Association, P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941  
Perry Backus, 65 Redtail, Dillon, MT 59725  
John Gatchell, Montana Wilderness Association, P.O. Box 635, Helena, MT 59624  
William Fairhurst, Public Lands Access Association, P.O. Box 247, Three Forks, MT 59752  
Jack Atcheson, State Lands Coalition, 3210 Ottawa Street, Butte, MT 59701

Dear Ladies and Gentleman:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site Development Project.

The comment period will be from November 13, 2001 until 5:00 p.m. December 14, 2001. Please send any comments you may have to: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Pipe Organ FAS Development, 1400 South 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59718, or e-mail [tgreason@montana.edu](mailto:tgreason@montana.edu).

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Flowers  
Regional Supervisor

to receive 2011

**Draft  
Environmental Assessment**

**PIPE ORGAN  
FISHING ACCESS SITE  
DEVELOPMENT**

**November 2001**



***Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks***

# DRAFT

## MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

### PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

**1. Type of Proposed State Action**

Improve entry road: construct cul-de-sac, parking area, and boat ramp; install road barriers, latrine, and signs.

**2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action**

The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished. The 1999 Legislature passed House Bill 626 (Section 87-1-303, MCA) that granted the FWP Commission the authority to adopt rules that address use conflicts on Montana's rivers, thus the final biennial rule for the Big Hole and Beaverhead Rivers were agreed upon by the Commission on February 9, 2001.

The Commission is adopting this interim, recreational use rules as biennial rules authorized under the Montana Administrative Procedure Act, 2-4-102(11)(d), MCA. Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) Act allows the development of this property as a recreation area, and a pursuant Permit for Recreation Site from DOT to FWP allows development of this site as a FWP fishing access site.

**3. Name of Project**

Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site Development

**4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**

Sponsored by Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)

**5. If Applicable:**

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date	March 2002
Estimated Completion Date	May 2002
Current Status of Project Design (% complete)	10%

**6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**

The Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site can be reached by traveling approximately 11 miles south from Dillon on Interstate 15; exit at the Daly's Exit onto the Upper Beaverhead Recreation Road and continue nearly two miles south across the Beaverhead River bridge at Pipe Organ Rocks. **Beaverhead County**, Township 9 South, Range 10 West, Section 11. The site totals 5.8 acres.

**7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed:	(d) Floodplain .....	acres
residential .....		
industrial .....	(e) Productive:	
	irrigated cropland .....	acres
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/	dry cropland .....	acres
Recreation.....	forestry.....	acres
	rangeland .....	acres
(c) Wetlands/Riparian	other.....	acres
Areas.....		



8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

Please refer to Appendix 2. A site plan from the FWP Design and Construction Bureau is unavailable at this time.

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

The Beaverhead River is nationally renowned for its high quality brown trout fisheries. The 1999 Montana Legislature passed House Bill 626 that granted the FWP Commission the authority to adopt rules that address use conflicts on Montana's rivers. In November of 2000, the FWP Commission approved a 25-year Permit for Recreation Site between the two agencies allowing FWP to "construct, operate, and maintain a fishing access site, boat landings, picnic and other public recreation areas." The FWP Commission agreed on a final biennial rule in February 2001 for the Beaverhead (and Big Hole) River, which restricts non-residents from float fishing from the Henneberry FAS to the Pipe Organ FAS on Sundays between the third Saturday in May through Labor Day.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has maintained the Pipe Organ site for about fifteen years, though the land is owned by the Montana Department of Transportation (DOT). This site is used heavily by anglers accessing the Beaverhead River. Because of increased user conflicts on the Beaverhead and Big Hole rivers, resource and property damage concerns, demands upon limited public facilities related to those use levels, and concerns over the quality of the recreational experience, the Commission found it necessary to manage the river use and used the biennial rule as one interim tool to do this. The Beaverhead Recreational Advisory Group recommended improving the Pipe Organ site to also solve some of these problems. As noted above, the biennial rule specifies Pipe Organ FAS as a start and end of river sections, which may formally increase the use at this site. A user survey conducted by FWP in Summer 2000 indicated that Pipe Organ FAS accommodates 17.7% of the take-outs, second highest, on the Beaverhead between Clark Canyon Dam and Barretts FAS. Henneberry FAS, just one mile upstream, accounts for 36% of take-outs. It is not currently a popular put-in access, as the five-access sites upstream account for 88% of the put-ins on the river, according to the same use survey. Improved facilities may disperse this use. A copy of the complete Big Hole/Beaverhead Rivers Biennial Rule and Use Surveys may be viewed at or requested from FWP Region 3 Headquarters, 1400 South 19<sup>th</sup>, Bozeman, MT 59718, or call 406-994-4042.

Based on use at the Henneberry Fishing Access Site, the Parks Division of FWP estimates that Pipe Organ FAS could receive about 20,000 visitors after the proposed improvements. Grasshopper Fishing Access Site is the next access point about 3 miles downstream from Pipe Organ and is also under a 25-year lease with the Department of Transportation.

The purpose of the improvements is to protect the site from further degradation and disperse visitation along the Beaverhead River. Public input to date supports improving this site.

The proposed improvements to Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site (FAS) include closing the entrance road next to the bridge with road barriers and grading and gravelling one entrance to the site from the county road on the eastern boundary. A gravel cul-de-sac and parking areas will allow efficient traffic flow for vehicles launching boats and others parking at the site. Parking for approximately 9

cars will be provided. The existing gravel boat ramp will be improved to a double-wide gravel or cable matt ramp (depending on funding) at the same location near the bridge. Installing a latrine will improve sanitation at this busy site. Approach signs on the frontage road (Upper Beaverhead Recreation Road) will alert drivers to the entrance. The pioneered road leading to the far north end of the site will be blocked due to the rough nature of the road and lack of funds to improve the road or the end parking area.

**10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

**(a) Permits:** all permits will be filed by FWP or the contractor 3-4 weeks prior to construction

Agency Name	Permit	Date Filed/#
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FWP	124 Permit	
Army Corps of Engineers	404 Fill Permit	
Beaverhead County Sanitarian	Floodplain sealed vault septic system permit	
DNRC – Beaverhead County	Floodplain construction permit	
Beaverhead County	Weed Permit	

**(b) Funding**

Agency Name	Funding Amount
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Fish, Wildlife & Parks	
Fishing Access Site Development Funds (License)	\$40,000

**(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities**

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	cultural site protection

**11. List of Agencies Consulted during Preparation of the EA.**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Parks Division  
 Fisheries Division  
 Wildlife Division  
 Design and Construction Bureau  
 Nongame Species Coordinator  
 Lands Division  
 Bureau of Land Management – Wildlife Division, Dillon  
 SHPO will be consulted by FWP when the results of the cultural survey are confirmed  
 Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System)  
 Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (floodplain management)

# PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
< a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c))			X		yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
or e. For P-R/D-I projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		N/A				
f. Other _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Minor and temporary amounts of dust are anticipated due to construction of roads and parking areas. Removal of vegetation surrounding the project will be minimized to limit dust. All disturbed areas will be seeded after project completion to reduce future dust.

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.



## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. WATER	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
< a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		yes	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				3j.
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				3j.
ℳ. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		N/A				
ℳm. For P-R/D-I, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		N/A				
n. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. The boat ramp modifications will cause minor and temporary increases to turbidity levels. Equipment will not enter the water. All construction impacts will be mitigated by use of temporary erosion controls, revegetation, and the use of Best Management Practices. Dissolved oxygen and temperature levels are not expected to be notably impacted.

3b. Drainage patterns will change slightly due to the improved road and parking area. These impacts will be limited by the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs), for which FWP is a lead agency in developing and using. The use of gravel surfaces and BMP grading will preclude large amounts of runoff, and may provide better control of runoff than the existing pioneered roads. The net amount of road surface is not expected to change with the proposed project, considering that one entrance will be closed and reclaimed and the eastern-most rough road will be closed. Runoff amounts, therefore, are not expected to change significantly.

3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

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3j. The quantity or quality of surface water in the Beaverhead River will not be altered by this project. The proposed project will provide safer and more efficient access to the river by providing designated and improved use areas including a wider boat ramp, parking, and a sealed vault latrine. Designating use areas and discouraging indiscriminate use of the river bank aids in protecting the water quality.

#### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. <u>VEGETATION</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		yes	4e.
44f. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				
g. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. The proposed site design utilizes disturbed areas to the highest degree. The proposed wider, boat ramp, cul-de-sac, parking areas, and latrine will eliminate about 1 acre of vegetation on the 5.8-acre site. Vegetation in the project area is common along the Beaverhead River: willow, wild rose, grasses and a some sagebrush on the fringes of property boundary. FWP contracts require construction to be contained to the immediate area, thus limiting the indirect impacts to the greater surrounding vegetation.

4c. A search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resource Information System) identified two species of milk vetch in sections near the project area; recorded sightings are about one mile or more away from the project location. The Bitterroot milk vetch (*Astragalus scaphoides*) and the Railhead milk vetch (*Astragalus terminalis*) are considered "imperiled because of rarity and/or other factors making it vulnerable to extinction" in the Montana. These species occupy dry, open slopes, which do not describe the construction area adjacent to the river occupied with willows and grasses. Due to the high amount of use and disturbance at this site, it is unlikely that these species occupy the construction area.

4e. The Pipe Organ site has been included in the Region 3 Weed Management Plan for many years and Beaverhead County currently sprays the existing entry roads and parking areas to combat weed infestation. Hounds-tongue does occur at the site. Areas disturbed by construction will be prone to the establishment of noxious weeds; however, all disturbed areas will be seeded with mixed grass immediately after construction to reduce the possibility of weeds becoming established. FWP Region 3 will monitor disturbed areas until adequate ground cover has returned and regularly thereafter, in accordance with the revised Region 3 Weed Management Plan and Beaverhead County Weed Board.

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# **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

< 5. FISH/WILDLIFE	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			X		yes	5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X			5f.
g. Increase conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		yes	5g.
h. For P-R/D-I, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		N/A				
i. For P-R/D-I, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		N/A				
j. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

FWP Fisheries Biologist Dick Oswald manages this reach of the Beaverhead River which includes species such as: brown trout, mountain whitefish, few rainbow trout and brook trout, burbot, longnose suckers, mottled sculpin, white suckers, longnose dace, and common carp. Oswald told Sue Dalbey on May 21, 2001 that no cutthroat trout inhabit this section of the Beaverhead River. Arctic Grayling Recovery Biologist Jim Magee indicated to Sue Dalbey on August 30, 2001 that the Barretts diversion dam is a barrier to grayling reaching the stretch of river near Pipe Organ. Overall, both biologists predict that the proposed project will have only minor and temporary impacts to the Beaverhead River and the fisheries due to construction. Oswald may suggest specific construction requirements under the 124 Permit/Stream Protection Act when he reviews detailed plans and the project application.

FWP Wildlife Biologist Gary Hammond told Sue Dalbey on August 8, 2001 that many species use the Pipe Organ area including whitetail and mule deer, waterfowl, Hungarian partridge, blue grouse, and neotropical migrant birds. Constant disturbance from the Interstate 15 and Recreation Road to the west, fishing access site, county road and the railroad to the east, precludes much wildlife use at the 5.8-acre fishing access site. The neotropical birds use willows for nesting; however, the small area in the fishing access site that will be removed is probably not heavily used now due to the surrounding disturbance and the availability of more secure habitat up- and downstream. Hammond does not expect wildlife use of this site to change significantly due to the proposed construction.

Bureau of Land Management Wildlife Biologist Jim Roscoe conveyed to Sue Dalbey on August 14, 2001 that a bald eagle nest is located about three miles south of the project area. Eagles will occupy the area year round, however most forage occurs south of Pipe Organ. Prairie falcons occupy the pipe organ rocks, as well as red tail hawks and great horned owls. Roscoe also state that the use of willows by the neotropical birds at the project site will be limited due to

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the high public use of the area. He noted that otters use the area, but there is not a den near here. Roscoe confirmed that the ferruginous hawk does not occupy this area.

FWP Nongame Coordinator Dennis Flath suggested to Sue Dalbey on August 1, 2001 that the construction would not impact the bald eagles nesting south of the site. He added that golden eagles might also use the area. The Great Basin pocket mouse may inhabit this general area and was identified in 1961 three miles north by the Montana Natural Heritage Program data search. Flath commented that the range and habitat of this species in Montana is largely unknown. The pocket mouse is globally secure, but quite rare in Montana, as it is on the periphery of its habitat.

5a. Some willows will be removed to accommodate the new site design, however it is generally agreed by biologists that this habitat has limited use to wildlife due to the constant disturbance adjacent to the willows and the availability of more secure habitat a short distance up- or downstream. The site improvements were designed to use open and previously disturbed areas to the largest degree possible, thus limiting the impacts to fish and wildlife habitat.

5b. A few small nongame species such as song birds may be displaced by the new construction and temporarily added noise. As noted above, much of this area receives so much public use, that wildlife use is limited.

5f. The biologists consulted agreed that the proposed project would not impact any threatened or endangered fish or wildlife species. The bald eagle was the only species in close proximity at about 3 miles south. The status of the pocket mouse is somewhat unknown; however, it is a secure species globally, and was identified in sagebrush habitat, unlike the construction zone.

5g. The improvements at this site will likely increase visitation at this site, which will add some stress to fish and wildlife populations. Impacts to wildlife is mitigated somewhat by the proposed project by designating efficient ingress/egress routes and reducing indiscriminate and off-road use of the site, thus allowing regrowth of habitat in overused areas and eliminating vehicles in some parts of the site.

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**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		yes	6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. A minor and temporary increase in noise levels will occur during construction due to the use of large equipment, such as graders, dump trucks, loaders, etc. Due to the other noise in the area created by use of Interstate 15, the Recreation Road, county road and railroad track, this temporary added noise is not considered a significant impact. The nearest neighbor is about a half mile west on the opposite side of Interstate 15, the Recreation Road and the Beaverhead River. Construction will occur prior to the opening of fishing season the third Saturday in May, thus anglers will not be impacted by the construction noise.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

7. LAND USE	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?			X positive			7a.
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				7c.
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. The improvements to this fishing access site may make this a more viable and less crowded access for guides, thus allowing for a more enjoyable client experience and may encourage return trips.

7c. The proposed improvements are part of the Big Hole-Beaverhead Recreational Use Plan, which does identify development of specific access sites along the Beaverhead River to accommodate the high use.

<sup>3</sup> Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

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## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X positive			8c.
d. For P-R/D-I, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. The FWP Region 3 Weed Management Plan calls for an integrated method of managing weeds, including the use of herbicides. The use of weed controlling chemicals will be in compliance with application guidelines and by people trained in safe handling techniques to limit the possibility of an accident.

8c. Installation of a wider and improved boat ramp will reduce the risk of accidents while launching or taking out boats by providing a more stable and unchanging surface. Installation of a latrine will provide a cleaner, healthier environment as visitation increases.

3

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

4

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

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Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X positive			9a.
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X			9d.
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X positive			9e.
f. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9a. This project was identified by the Big Hole-Beaverhead Recreational Use Advisory Group to alleviate crowding on the river and reduces impacts at other river access sites. The proposed project is expected to cause a slight increase in visitation at the Pipe Organ FAS, however, it is hoped that visitation at other sites may drop slightly.

9d. The site improvements may encourage fishing guides and outfitters to use this site more frequently. This is a desired outcome of the Big Hole-Beaverhead Biennial Rule.

9e. The proposed road design will provide a uniform and designated traffic pattern, resulting in a safer site for vehicles and pedestrians. It is intended to make a more efficient site for traffic with boat trailers launching, loading and parking.

3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

4 Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

5 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

6 Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.



## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: <u>sewage disposal, site maintenance</u>			X		yes	10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
< e. Define projected revenue sources						10e.
< f. Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10a. The improvements at this site create a slight increase in FWP maintenance, however, FWP has provided some maintenance to this site for many years. A seasonal fishing access site caretaker is an existing position that maintains other similar sites in the area. Adding the Pipe Organ FAS to the duties of this caretaker is appropriate and will not diminish the level of maintenance at neighboring access sites. Attaining a recreational permit on the property allows FWP to protect the site in a more formal and proactive way with fewer user conflicts.

10e. Approximately \$40,000 is available from the FWP general license dollar account earmarked for fishing access site capital development.

10f. Site maintenance including cleaning the latrine, signing, fencing, etc., is expected to cost between \$800 and \$1,000, which will be budgeted from the FWP Region 3 Fishing Access Site Maintenance Fund.

3 Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

4 Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

5 Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

6 Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

< 11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X			9c.
d. For P-R/D-I, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		N/A				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The majority of the proposed project is low profile and does not greatly differ from kind of facilities currently provided. It does, however, provide designated routes, site protection, and more efficient and safer use of the site. The project will allow one entrance and the rough eastern road to revegetate. The latrine is a more high profile element, but is not considered a significant impact to the area aesthetics due to high willows in the area that will shield it from view in many directions. In addition, the latrine has a natural aggregate finish to help blend with the natural setting.

9c. The project will provide a higher quality access to the Beaverhead River, with the intent to disperse use, thereby, increasing the quantity and quality of recreational experience. Please refer to the attached Tourism Report, Appendix 5.

## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

2. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? <b>Attach SHPO letter of clearance.</b> (Also see 12.a)		N/A				
e. Other: _____ n/a						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. Department of Transportation Cultural Coordinator John Axline stated to Sue Dalbey on August 15, 2001, that Interstate 15 near Pipe Organ FAS was constructed in the early 1970's and DOT was not required to conduct a cultural survey. A private party conducted a cultural survey for FWP in late August. No cultural properties were found on the site. After the FWP Cultural Coordinator receives the final cultural report, he will consult with the SHPO in regard to the survey results and request concurrence with the project plans. The project is not expected to impact cultural or historic resources.

<sup>3</sup> Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

☑ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

☑☑ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.



## HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT <sup>3</sup>				Can Impact Be Mitigated <sup>3</sup>	Comment Index
	Unknown <sup>3</sup>	None	Minor <sup>3</sup>	Potentially Significant		
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X		yes	13a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if, they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?			X positive			13c.
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-I, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-I, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				Page 3

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13a. This project will have minor impacts to the Pipe Organ site and overall minor impacts to the use of the Beaverhead River as part of the Big Hole-Beaverhead Recreational Use Plan. Use is expected to increase at the Pipe Organ site; however, is intended to relieve some of the pressure at other fishing access sites up and downstream, which are heavily used by resident and nonresident, guided and non-guided anglers. It is important to protect this site environmentally from over use and abuse. Dispersing the use among designated sites will also help protect the other access sites from damaging over-use.

13c. The proposed project implements a component of the Big Hole-Beaverhead Recreational Use Plan in an attempt to accommodate the recreational demands on this river and angler access, yet protect the area from excess use. A copy of this plan can be viewed or requested from the FWP Region 3 Headquarters, 1400 South 19<sup>th</sup>, Bozeman, MT 59718, or call 406-994-4042.

3

Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

4

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

44

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

**2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action, whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider, and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

**Alternative 1. No Action**

If no action is taken at this site, Pipe Organ FAS will continue to degrade as vehicles attempt to maneuver around other vehicles randomly parked and accessing the site. Vegetation will be trampled; unsurfaced roads will get rough with inclement weather and vehicle use; sanitation will become unsightly and unhealthy. These problems will increase as visitation increases.

**Alternative 2. Improve only the boat ramp.**

FWP could widen and cement the boat ramp to provide a better launching/take-out point. Without further site improvements, this alternative does not address the degradation of the entire site, which will occur with the anticipated increased visitation, as noted in the No Action alternative, above. This would be a contracted service abiding by FWP standard requirements for boat ramps and contractors.

**Alternative 3. Grade and gravel the existing site.**

FWP could grade and gravel the site as it currently is laid out to accommodate use in inclement weather and encourage use of designated routes. As visitation increases, however, the site will not have the capacity for vehicles with trailers to ingress/egress the site and park. Anglers will park on the county road right-of-way, trample vegetation, and sanitation will become a problem. The grading and gravel work would be done by a private contractor.

**Alternative 4. Preferred alternative (Proposed Action): Relocate entrance, widen boat ramp, design gravel cul-de-sac and parking areas, install latrine.**

The proposed project maintains the site as a low cost, low development site in conjunction with the other access sites along the Beaverhead River. The project does address concerns listed above by providing designated parking, maintaining a healthy environment, allowing safe access during inclement weather, and safe travel within the site. FWP has found the cul-de-sac design to provide clear and efficient ingress/egress for vehicles with trailers launching boats while using a minimal amount of space. Designated parking allows for efficient parking and maneuvering within the site. A doublewide boat ramp will accommodate the anticipated high use; if funding is available, cable matting will be installed to stabilize the ramp area. This project would be completed under contract outside of the fishing season.

**3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

FWP engineering staff will oversee the completion of the project, thus the contractor will be held to the terms of the project, such as limiting soil and vegetation disturbance to the immediate project area, and seeding disturbed areas to aid in reclamation. DNRC has jurisdiction over construction in the floodplain and the Beaverhead County Sanitarian must approve the installation of the sealed vault septic system (latrine).

Stipulations outlined in the construction contract, 124 Stream Protection Act permit and project review by the FWP Fisheries Biologist will require the contractor to use erosion controls to limit



siltation, deposition, or changes to the river channel. FWP engineering staff designed this project using Best Management Practices, which will limit changes in surface water runoff or drainage patterns. Closed roads will be scarified and seeded to reduce future erosion.

Noxious weeds will be monitored by FWP after completion and controlled in accordance with methods outlined in the revised Region 3 Weed Management Plan and the Beaverhead County Weed Board.

Improved river access will provide more angler pressure at this site, but this is a goal of the Biennial Rule and a purposeful management tool. These changes are not a detriment to the fisheries in this case; it will provide site protection and reduce user conflicts.

Traffic patterns and safety increase by allowing one entrance route, cul-de-sac, and parking areas. Pumping and cleaning of the latrine will be the only added increase in governmental services and this is standard for FWP fishing access sites.

**4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:**

This environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

**5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two legal notices in each of these papers: Dillon Tribune, Bozeman Chronicle, Helena Independent Record;
- One statewide press release;
- Public Notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page:  
*<http://fwp.state.mt.us/notices/default.asp>.*

Copies of the EA will be mailed directly to the neighboring landowners to ensure their knowledge of the proposed action.

The opportunities for public input listed above are appropriate for the proposed actions since few negative environmental impacts are identified.



#### **6. Duration of comment period if any:**

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., December 14, 2001 and can be mailed to the address below:

Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1400 S. 19<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Bozeman, MT 59718  
*tgreason@montana.edu*

#### **7. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:**

Sue Dalbey  
Independent Contractor  
Dalbey Resources  
926 N. Lamborn St.  
Helena, MT 59601  
406-443-8058

Tom Greason  
Parks Maintenance Supervisor  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1400 S. 19<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Bozeman, MT 59718  
406-994-4042

Jerry Walker  
State Parks Region 3 Manager  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1400 S. 19<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Bozeman, MT 59718  
406-994-4042

### **PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site was identified by a citizen's advisory group as an asset to the Beaverhead River access and recreational use program. Because of this designation and inclusion in the recreational use plan, visitation will increase. If the site is left "as is," the environment will suffer, and the aesthetics will decline due to an unhealthy, unkempt site. The Beaverhead River is renown for its fisheries and angling opportunities. The access sites should reflect that status, as well.

This analysis did not reveal any significant impacts to the human or physical environment. Some minor impacts will occur to the vegetation and water during construction, however these impacts would occur with the anticipated increase in visitation. With a designed site plan, routes can be designated and further degradation limited from off road use. No threatened or endangered species were identified in the area. No unique cultural, geological, or physical features will be affected. The proposed improvements will enhance the visitor's recreational opportunities and protect the site from environmental deterioration. The site development is consistent with many fishing access sites around the state.

#### **APPENDICES**

1. HB495 Qualification Checklist
2. Site Location Map
3. Site Plan (pending)
4. Building Plans: Latrine
5. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce

**APPENDIX 1**  
**HB495**  
**PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST**

**Date:** September 10, 2001

**Person Reviewing:** Sue Dalbey, consultant  
Dalbey Resources

**Project Location:** The Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site can be reached by traveling approximately 11 miles south from Dillon on Interstate 15; exit at the Dalys Exit onto the Upper Beaverhead Recreation Road and continue nearly two miles south across the Beaverhead River bridge at Pipe Organ Rocks. Beaverhead County, Township 9 South, Range 10 West, Section 11. The site totals 5.8 acres.

**Description of Proposed Work:** Improve entry road; construct culdesac, parking area, concrete boat ramp; install road barriers, latrine, signs.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check ☒ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- ☒ A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?  
Comments: *Most of the construction will occur on previously disturbed land, however part of the culdesac and the latrine will require removal of some willows and common grasses.*
- ☐ B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?  
Comments: *Only one pre-built, sealed vault latrines will be installed.*
- ☒ C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?  
Comments: *Construction of the access road, culdesac, parking and boat ramp will require excavation of more than 20c.y.*
- ☒ D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?  
Comments: *Improved site will designate parking areas; existing parking is not defined.*
- ☐ E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?  
Comments: *New ramp will not exceed double width.*
- ☒ F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?  
Comments: *The new ramp will require some slight excavating to allow for cement installation.*

- [ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?  
Comments: *Unknown at this time, though a cultural survey has been conducted and FWP will discuss the results with SHPO to determine if mitigation or site protection is necessary.*
- [ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?  
Comments: *None*
- [ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?  
Comments: *Day-use site only.*
- [ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?  
Comments: *Use will remain the same as historical use.*

**If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.**

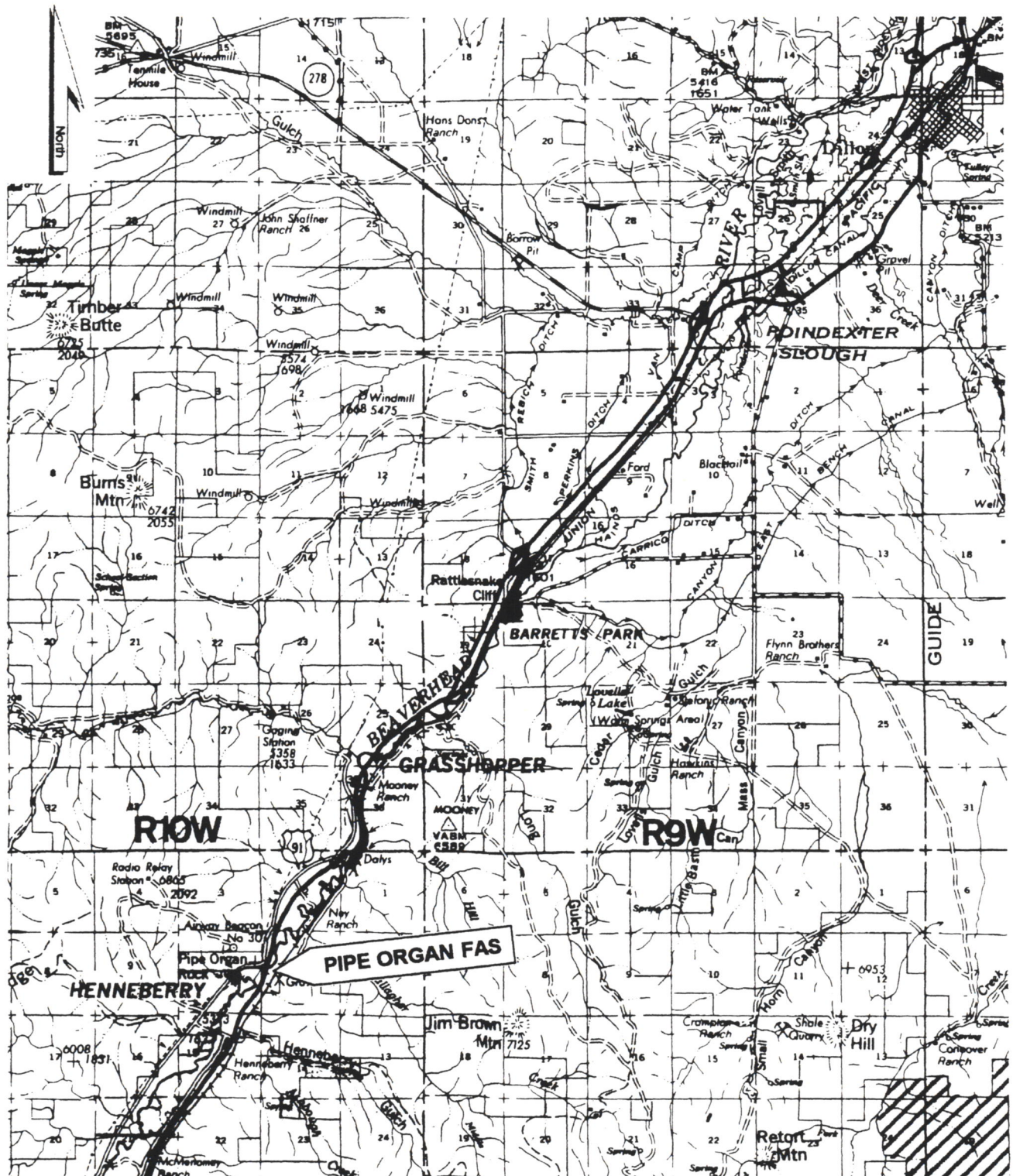


## APPENDIX 2

### Site Location Map – Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site

U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State of Montana Interagency Visitor Map  
1990

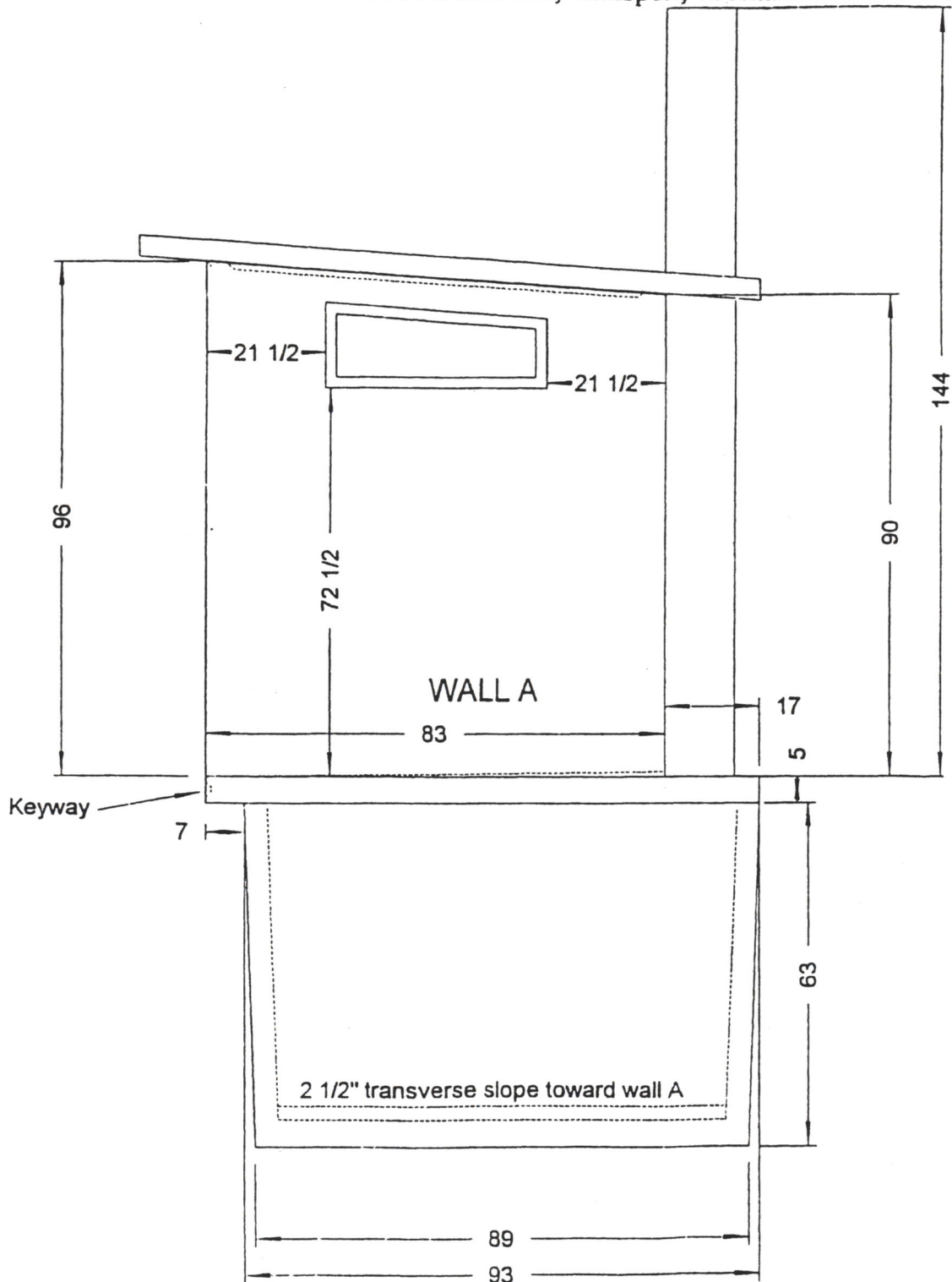
Other Fishing Access Sites shown: Henneberry, Grasshopper, Poindexter Slough



**APPENDIX 3**  
**Building Plans - Latrine**

f Flathead Concrete Products

c 2940 Highway 2 East-Kalispell  
p U.S. 93 South-Polson  
P.O. Box 5428, Kalispell, Montana 59903-5428



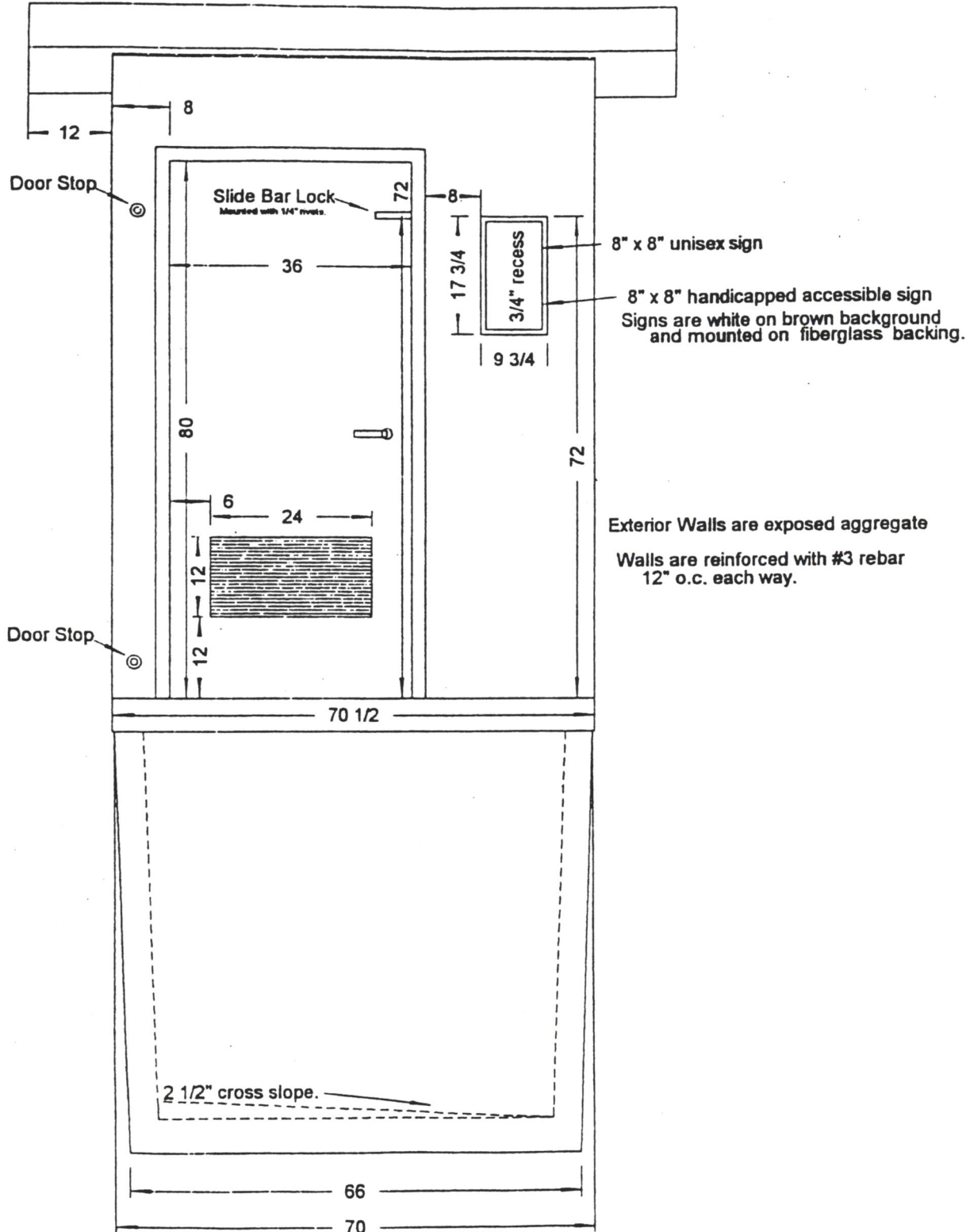
Thomas J. Barnard  
Professional Engineer  
3578 PE

Wall B is an exact opposite.

file:fwp9



f Flathead Concrete Products  
 c 2940 Highway 2 East- Kalispell  
 p US 93 South- Polson  
 P.O. Box 5428, Kalispell, Montana, 59903-5428



Thomas J. Barnard  
 Professional Engineer  
 3578 PE

**APPENDIX 4**  
**TOURISM REPORT**  
**MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495**

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator  
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce  
PO Box 200533  
1424 9<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620-0533

**Project Name: Pipe Organ Fishing Access Site Improvements**

**Project Description: Construct entry road, culdesac, parking areas, and concrete boat ramp; install road barriers, latrine, and signs.**

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?

(circle one)    NO                      YES                      If YES, briefly describe:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**request made Sep 17 -**

**waiting for response**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

(circle one)    NO                      YES                      If YES, briefly describe:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 5**  
**Clearance Letter – State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)**

Waiting for Cultural Survey Report from private consultant who conducted survey about August 22, 2001. SHPO will be consulted regarding survey findings.